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The CIA's Dirty Tricks under Fire—at Last

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For the first time in more than two decades, Congress is beginning to take a hard look at the Central Intelligence Agency. In the wake of revelations of CIA complicity in the Watergate affair, a serious debate about the Agency is now taking shape, and it could develop into an historic battle over the role of clandestine operations in American foreign policy.

"Clandestine operations" (which should not be confused with the gathering of foreign intelligence) include a wide range of political, propaganda, economic, cultural, and paramilitary activities known within the CIA as "covert action" and "special operations," or, more generally, Dirty Tricks. These operations have included, over the years, such practices as:

- Hidden support and assistance to political parties in foreign election campaigns.
- The establishment of dummy foundations to provide funds for a number of private organizations en-

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gaged in scholarship, propaganda, labor, youth, and cultural affairs.

- Establishing ostensibly independent, private companies, including a number of airlines.
- Arranging *coups d'etat*; supporting, training, and leading private armies and air forces in foreign nations.
- Helping to establish security police organizations in a number of countries, and other Cold War ploys.

The CIA operations amount, in total, to a clandestine American foreign policy under the exclusive control of the President, insulated from public control and even from public scrutiny—not to mention Congress itself.

President Nixon has given a clear signal that he places a high value on covert operations. His new Director of Central Intelligence, William Egan Colby, fifty-three, spent his adult life in Dirty Tricks, beginning with OSS guerrilla operations in World War II and culminating in a twelve-year stint as one of the CIA officials most deeply involved in the Vietnam war.

Colby was CIA station chief in Saigon (and a staunch supporter of President Ngo Dinh Diem) from 1959 to 1961. From 1962 through 1967 he was chief of the Far East Division of the Clandestine Services, the formal title of the operating arm of the CIA. From 1968 to 1971 he was involved with the "pacification"

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